

The Indian Crested Swift.

The bird described by Mr. Matthews is the male; the female has no chestnut.

We came across some in the Terai near the Tirrihannah T. E. on the 1st January 1932. In the Duars we found quite a number, on the 20th and 21st March 1935, in the forest at Chupramari.

Unlike other Swifts these birds may be often seen perched, in an upright position, on the branches of trees.

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Records of some rare, or uncommon, Geese and Ducks and other Water birds and Waders in North Bihar.

BY

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At first I thought of only giving records of the rare, and uncommon, Geese and Ducks but have now come to the conclusion that it would be interesting to those in N. Behar, if I added a list of species occurring and notes on the rarer Water birds and Waders as well, as they, or others, may, perhaps, be met with while out shooting. Another reason is to glean information as to the rarity or otherwise, of these birds in the District at the present time.

The Flamingo.

Phaenicopterus ruber antiquorum Temm.,
Locally called *Rajhans*.

Flamingo are rare birds in the Darbhanga District only occurring in the cold weather at intervals of years. The following were procured :—

2 ♂ & 1 ♀ shot by a Mirshikar on some jheel in the District 22nd. November 1907.

4 brought in alive, captured on some adjoining jheel 1st. February 1919.

None have been seen or heard of since.

Geese and Duck.

Eight species of Geese and thirty five species and subspecies of Duck occur in the whole of British India, Burma and Ceylon and out of these four species of Geese and twenty-six of Duck are to be found in this area, a very large percentage of the latter. I append a list of those which are found with us :—

1. The Comb-Duck (*Sarkidiornis melanotus* Pen.)
2. The Pink-headed Duck (*Rhodonessa caryophyllacea* Lath.)
3. The Cotton Teal (*Nettapus coromandelianus* Gmel.)
4. The Grey Lag Goose (*Anser anser* (Linn.))
5. The White-fronted Goose (*Anser albifrons* (Scop.))
6. Sushkin's Goose (*Anser neglectus* Sush.)
7. The Bar-headed Goose (*Anser indicus* Lath.))
8. The Lesser Whistling Teal (*Dendrocygna javanica* (Horsf.))
9. The Large Whistling Teal (*Dendrocygna fulva* (Gmel.))
10. The Sheldrake (*Tadorna tadorna* (Linn.))
11. The Ruddy Sheldrake (*Casarca ferruginea* (Vroeg.))
12. The Mallard (*Anas platyrhyncha* Linn.)
13. The Spotbill (*Anas pæcilorhyncha pæcilorhyncha* Forst.)
14. The Eastern Grey Duck (*Anas pæcilorhyncha zonorhyncha* Swin.)
15. The Falcated Teal (*Eunetta falcata* (Georgi.))
16. The Gadwall (*Chaulelasmus streperus* (Linn.))
17. The Wigeon (*Mareca penelope* (Linn.))

18. The Common Teal (*Nettion crecca crecca* (Linn.))
19. The Baikal Teal (*Nettion formosum* (Georgi))
20. The Pintail (*Dafila acuta acuta* (Linn.))
21. The Garganey (*Querquedula querquedula* (Linn.))
22. The Shoveller (*Spatula clypeata* (Linn.))
23. The Marbled Teal (*Marmaronetta angustirostris* (Mén.))
24. The Red-crested Pochard (*Netta rufina* (Pall.))
25. The Pochard (*Nyroca ferina ferina* (Linn.))
26. The White-eyed Pochard (*Nyroca rufa rufa* Linn.)
27. The Eastern White-eye (*Nyroca rufa baeri* (Radde))
28. The Tufted Pochard (*Nyroca fuligula fuligula* (Linn.))
29. The Golden-eye (*Glaucionetta clangula clangula* (Linn.))
30. The Eastern Goosander (*Mergus merganser orientalis*, Gould.)

I will now add a few notes on the rarer and more uncommon ones in our area.

The Nukhta or Comb-Duck.

Sarkidiornis melanotus (Pennant) Local name *Nukhta*.

I found this fine Duck an uncommon bird in the Darbhanga District. The following specimens were obtained:—

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|--|------------------------|
| ♀ Maiser Chanar ... | ... 8th. January, 1903 |
| ♀ near Benoa Chanar ... | ... 12th. March, 1904 |
| ♂ near Baghownie ... | ... 18th. April, 1907 |
| ♂ breeding, with a fine comb,
Buchowlie, shot by the late
H. E. Crowdy ... | ... 11th. May, 1915 |

- | | |
|----------------------|-----------------------|
| 2 ♀ near Anarh ... | ... 27th. April, 1908 |
| 2 ♀ near Anarh ... | ... 3rd. May, 1908 |
| ♀ near Baghownie ... | ... 7th. June, 1912 |

The Pink-headed Duck.

Rhodonessa caryophyllacea (Lath.)

This is an extremely rare duck. I have only obtained 8 specimens since 1903.

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|---|--------------------------|
| ♂ Benoa Chanar ... | ... 9th. August, 1903 |
| ♂ Benoa Chauar. Kept in captivity
for some time ... | ... 26th. June, 1905 |
| ♀ near Baghownie ... | ... 2nd. September, 1906 |
| ♀ near Baghownie brought in by
<i>mirshikar</i> with an egg laid
in the basket. I kept it in
captivity for a considerable
time but no further eggs
were laid ... | ... 23rd. July, 1910 |
| ♂ in breeding plumage near
Baghownie ... | ... 25th. July, 1910 |
| ♂ ♀ Simarda, near Baghownie... | 7th. April, 1923 |

This pair was shot in a small piece of water in company with Whistling Teal. They had fed on small shell fish and a small crab.

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|----------------------|---------------------|
| ♂ near Baghownie ... | ... 21st. June 1935 |
|----------------------|---------------------|

A few others have been seen. I have one from Furekeer in the Monghyr District obtained on 11th. July 1905.

Two were shot in 1898 by the late Mr. J. A. Wilson of Dumra in the Mozufferpur District, on his Factory tank. Another, a male, was shot in the same year by Mr. Phillips on the Bhoonda Jheel, near Nawada Factory in the Champaran District.

In 1899 a fine male was shot by Mr. E. K. Boileau, on a very small *jheel*, near Bhamo Factory in the Saran District.

Mr. Ferrars Munro reports that two were killed by Mr. Barney Hickey, at Tatariah some 10 years or so ago.

An advertisement was inserted, some years back, in the leading Indian newspapers "Wanted:—To BUY, PINK-HEADED ducks and drakes. Hindi name "Goolabi Seer" (not red-crested pochards). Rs. 100/- each delivered sound Calcutta. Apply Box 0649, Advt. Dept."

A very interesting article on "The Disappearance of the Pink-headed Duck" by Sir John Bucknill, K.C., at one time a Patna High Court Judge, appeared in the *Ibis* January 1924.

(To be continued.)

The Snakes of Northern Bengal and Sikkim.

By

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PART IX.

(Continued from Vol. XIV. No. 4. Page 145.)

THE SMOOTH SNAKES (*Liopeltis* formerly *Ablabes*).

Our next three snakes belong to this *genus* and must therefore be grouped together though it must be admitted that, externally at any rate, the "family likeness" between the members in our area is not strong, two being fairly thick-set with no visible neck and the third (unknown when Boulenger gave this character for the *genus*) is a slender snake with a distinct neck. All our species have fifteen rows of scales at mid-body and all have a large number of small, equal-sized maxillary teeth.

46. LIOPELTIS STOLICZKAE (Schlater) Stoliczka's Smooth-snake. Not poisonous.

Synonym : *Ablabes stoliczkae*.

Costals : 15, 15, 13 smooth, *Ventrals* : 148-154, *Anal* : divided, *Sub-caudals* : 116-136,

Shape : A slender little snake with a distinct neck. The only specimen we have seen was got by Shaw who overlooked it among a big daily catch in mistake for *Dendrophis pictus*, The Eastern Bronzeback (our No. 37) of which he was getting a great number at that time. This gives an idea of the shape.

Colour : Almost uniform putty-coloured above with very faint darker lateral lines; white beneath, the two colours sharply divided in the middle of the outer costal rows. There is a black streak beginning just in front of and below the eye, widening behind the eye and tapering out on the neck. The iris is rich brown and the pupil round.

Size : Our one specimen was 18½ inches long.

Habitat : This appears to be an extremely rare snake. Our specimen, now in the Darjeeling Museum, was from Mongpoo and Wall found two specimens in the Darjeeling Museum which are not there now. Wall records the distribution as "E. Himalayas, Assam and Burma."

47. LIOPELTIS CALAMARIA (Günther), Günther's Smooth-Snake. Not poisonous.

Synonym : *Ablabes calamaria*.

Costals : 15, 15, 15, smooth, *Ventrals* : 126-163, *Anal* : divided, *Sub-caudals* : 53-76.

Shape : A noticeably smooth, cylindrical snake with a small head and no visible neck. The eye is larger than in Rapp's Smooth-snake (our No. 48), and is more than half the length of the snout. The pupil of the eye is round.

Colour : We have never seen this snake; Boulenger gives:—"Pale brown above with or without two more or less distinct black longitudinal lines, lower parts uniform yellowish."

Size : Up to 16 inches long.

Habitat : This snake was, we believe, found in our area by Wall who has added "Himalayas" to Boulenger's "Ceylon,